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Short Cuts in Sewing

By HELEN EASTER

DO YOU remember the days when the sewing lady came to your house and sewed and sewed and then you pulled the bastings? And there were yards and yards and spools and spools of bastings, and mother made you save them all so carefully? Do you remember the hours spent on fine hand finishings and tiny seams, that never showed at all when your friends admired your new dress? But that was several years ago. The idea today is not only to save time, energy and basting thread, but to do everything in the easiest way possible.

Have you often marveled at the clever ideas that are used to put together the readymade dress, and have you stopped to realize that you have most of the facilities in your own home to make those very same things, and that they are simplicity personified if you just take the time to analyse them?

Take for instance the cable stitch that has been so popular as a little "stylish touch" to the ready made dress. Do you know that all you have to do to make that same cable stitch is to wind your bobbin with heavy mercerized or silk thread and lengthen the stitch? Then stitch from the wrong side.

The bound buttonhole has been not only a popular trimming but a useful one as well. It is used for dresses, belts or as a foundation for the set in pocket and is very easily made. A bias piece of material is used for the binding and the eight steps are as follows:

1. Mark with basting thread the exact length of buttonhole.
2. Lay a piece $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and 1 inch longer than the opening over it, on the right side, with center to the basting line.
3. Stitch the width of the foot from the basting all around.
4. Cut on basting line and diagonally to the corners.
5. Pull contrasting material through the hole.
6. Pull back the short ends.
7. Bring cut edges back to the middle.
8. Stitch just outside the outer edge of binding.

And there you have a finish that is neat and durable. It may be "just for looks" or it may be used to finish the set-in pocket in the middle you are making for the young sister. But even this method of making bound buttonholes is not simple enough for the efficiency experts of the art of dressmaking. That simple device which is listed in your book of machine attachments as the "binder" is a little gem in the saving of time in dressmaking. Bias binding has been used in a trimming for dresses, an easy way to finish a seam when the material is too bulky to use a French seam, as a finish for the flat seam and now to make a sturdy buttonhole that is especially practical for the small youngster's rompers.

Do you remember what a tedious job it was to make a placket and how the placket on your petticoat was just as laboriously made as the placket on your Sunday dress? But why such work. Who ever stops to look at a placket?

There are three easy plackets to make,

the extension placket, the bound placket and the faced placket. The extension placket is a good one to use for your underwear and wash dresses. It is made by first leaving an extension on the material when cutting. Stitch a strip of bias tape under each side on a line with the seam, making thickness to which to sew fasteners. Then bind the raw edges with bias tape.

The bound placket can be used for children's wash dresses when the placket comes under a plait. Simply bind the opening with a continuous piece of bias tape.

The faced placket is for sheer dresses, where it is desirable for no stitching to show. This is a little more difficult to make. There are eight steps.

1. Cut a piece twice the width of desired finished placket.
2. Hem with narrow machine hemmer.
3. Crease through the center.
4. Place center of placket piece on line where placket is to be cut.
5. Stitch width of narrow foot from crease on each side.
6. Cut through the center.
7. Pull placket piece through to wrong side.
8. Crease and stitch close to the edge.

How many housewives realize how very versatile the sewing machine is even without the attachments. It will not only sew a fine seam, but it will darn your table cloths and bed linen in the neatest possible way. Just tie up the foot so that it is about $1/16$ of an inch from the feed, which allows the work to be drawn forward or backward. Then stitch forward and backward making rows of stitching very close together. Put in first lengthwise stitchings and then crosswise. It will over-cast raw edges if you just tie it up as for darning and then run the stitching in a zigzag line; and it will gather your skirt beautifully if you lengthen the stitch. Put in a double row of stitching and then pull the threads up until you have the desired fullness.

There are two other neglected friends of the seamstress, the common pin and the homely flat iron. They will both save your time and temper many times if you use them wisely. Basting is so often unnecessary labor. These few hints will help.

Place pins in the cloth at right angles to the edge.

Press a wrinkled pattern before laying it on the goods.

Press wrinkled material before cutting a garment.

Press the second turn of a French seam.

Pin the hem or facing after it is pressed.

Pin seams instead of basting.

The art of dressmaking has been greatly simplified during the last few years, but we cannot criticize the results. The dresses of today are just as pretty and just as serviceable as the dresses of yesterday. We have learned that the art of homemaking in all of its phases has had to come up to the 20th century methods and ideas.

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